Congo Square: Evidence and Embodiment | Teacher Guide

6–8 | Louisiana Dance & Movement Lab | source evaluation and gesture invention | 2–4 sessions of 35–60 minutes

Essential question

How can dancers use source evaluation and gesture invention to investigate Historical Congo Square and limits of reconstructing undocumented movement while respecting its cultural context?

Cultural context

Historical Congo Square and limits of reconstructing undocumented movement. Use community-led sources; interpret rather than claim authenticity.

Learning targets

01. Execute and adapt source evaluation and gesture invention while maintaining safety and rhythmic/expressive intentionality.

02. Identify community authorship and context for Historical Congo Square and limits of reconstructing undocumented movement.

03. Develop an original movement score with a recognizable beginning, transformation and ending.

04. Apply peer feedback and document one deliberate revision.

Materials

Open movement space, marked floor pathways, whiteboard, accessible chairs/supports, optional scarves, source-approved listening clip, paper movement score, consent-based recording device.

Differentiation

12–32 count compositional study, rhythm annotations, specific critique language and two contextual sources.

Ten-step teaching sequence

01. Engage: Watch or discuss a credited, age-appropriate example relevant to Historical Congo Square and limits of reconstructing undocumented movement; identify one observed movement and one uncertainty.

02. Investigate: Locate the tradition, historical period, community and purpose; distinguish a living dance from your own new composition. Research: https://www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/folklife/

03. Skill Studio: Warm up safely and practice source evaluation and gesture invention in three controlled variations, with seated/low-impact options.

04. Generate: Improvise three original movement phrases (4–8 counts each) exploring changes in energy, level, timing or direction.

05. Plan: Choose an idea, structure its beginning, contrast and ending, and document performer choice, accessible roles and consent.

06. Produce: Compare two historical sources; devise contemporary movement about memory and explicitly identify what cannot be reconstructed. Rehearse carefully with defined boundaries and artist/performer attribution.

07. Critique: Partners describe one specific observable choice, one cultural-context question and one respectful improvement.

08. Revise: Change a timing, transition, spatial choice or gesture in response to evidence; document before-and-after.

09. Present: Share 30–90 seconds (K–5) or 60–180 seconds (6–12) live or as a recorded/diagrammed score; cite the source and distinguish invented choreography.

10. Reflect: Explain source evaluation and gesture invention, the cultural context, the revision and the next technical goal.

Teacher prompts

01. Who developed or sustains Historical Congo Square and limits of reconstructing undocumented movement?

02. What is observed versus invented in our source evaluation and gesture invention study?

03. How can your dance communicate without copying a sacred or community-specific practice?

04. Which revision improved your movement choices?

Formative checks

Beginning: baseline four-count phrase and question. Middle: three movement trials and a source note. End: performance or movement score with revision evidence.

Safety and cultural care

No unsafe lifts, forced contact or required public performance. Warm up, establish clear floor boundaries and allow mobility adaptations. Cultural material from Black masking, Indigenous or sacred traditions is examined through primary sources, not reenacted without community partnership and permission.

Alignment

Louisiana dance arts strands: Creative Expression, Aesthetic Perception, Historical and Cultural Perspective, Critical Analysis. National Core Arts Standards Dance: Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting. Exact grade/benchmark codes require local curriculum crosswalk.

Primary and contextual sources

https://doe.louisiana.gov/educators/instructional-support/planning-resources/k-12-arts-resources
https://www.louisianafolklife.org/lfp/main_prog_sugg_for_fieldw.html
https://www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/folklife/

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